

## ***Peoria Journal Star History***

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Throughout the many papers that have led up to the *Peoria Journal Star* people have expressed their ideas, and therefore affected the community and their ideas greatly.

As a result of the *Peoria Journal Star* and its predecessors, a rich history was created by Peoria's journalism industry.

The early years of Peoria's journalism industry started off slowly, and the *Peoria Journal Star* began with the *Daily Transcript* on December 3, 1855. The founders were self-proclaimed independents when the Democratic Party was breaking down. Soon after, the *Transcript* was sold to Nathan Geers. The profits from the ads were steady, but the *Transcript* needed to make a serious profit. Peoria was also a very politically challenging town. A paper called the *Democratic Press* was also printed at the same time as the *Transcript*. The *Transcript* won the German readership but the *Transcript* switched owners. The new owner made it even more Republican than its previous owners. The citizens of Peoria supported the paper during hard times and through the Civil War. The *Transcript* succeeded grandly; it beat out four local Democratic papers from 1861 to 1865.

In the 1870s the *Transcript* did not do very well; it came under new ownership after the successful owner retired, and two brothers were the new owners. As the struggle continued at *Transcript* headquarters, Baldwin and J. B. Barnes started the *Peoria Journal* on December 3, 1877. Soon after this new paper began, in 1880 the *Transcript* changed to R. H. Whiting. On May 8, 1881 the *Transcript*

published the first Sunday paper in Peoria's history. The business was becoming more competitive; it made the *Transcript* more distinguished than the other newspapers.

Another new daily paper to Peoria journalism industry was the *Herald*. This company performed a combination of printing and book binding. The *Herald* was a Democratic paper and this was an important change for Peorians. When the *Herald* began as the third part of the *Peoria Journal Star* family tree it commented very boldly. On Friday, December 30, 1898, the *Herald* made one of its most important moves during its entire history. It announced on the front page of the paper that “*Herald* purchases the *Transcript* and *Times*- Is Now The Only Morning Daily Paper In Peoria.” After the *Herald* purchased the *Transcript*; the combined papers were still called the *Herald*. On May 10, 1899, the flag was changed to *Peoria Herald-Transcript*. A new concept was introduced to Peoria, the Republican and Democratic views would not compete against each other; they would be expressed equally in the same daily. Throughout the next ten years the paper did not do very well. On August 17, 1914, the papers split. Then, the *Transcript* lowered its price to only one cent per issue. This brought back a lot of readers because the paper was affordable.

The new member of the *Peoria Journal Star* family tree was the *Evening Journal*. This new newspaper was founded by Eugene Baldwin and J. B. Barnes. The *Journal* became bigger and more modernized to help it dominate the Peoria journalism industry. Artwork and pictures began to appear to vary the black print. The town grew as a midwestern railroad hub and was soon to boom in industry and

distilleries. The paper included real photos and Sunday comics. The *Journal* was one of the most influential papers in Peoria's history because it changed Peoria's literature industry and, overall, modernized the town and its economy. A new company took over the *Journal* on February 2, 1900, and made it a Republican paper after a decade of non-political favorites. Over seven years after 1891 the *Journal* and *Transcript* lost ground to the *Herald*, those two papers were bought and combined making a lot of Peoria's news business under one "corporate umbrella."

On September 27, 1897, the *Evening Star* was a new paper to Peoria. The owners said "They started on hope and a bucket of ink." Soon after the *Star* began "We had the snappiest paper in town," said Charles Lambert the editor. The *Journal-Transcript* still dominated the industry at its seventieth anniversary. The *Star's* aim was ad revenue and readership. This was a task that most of the papers in Peoria were struggling with because there were five daily papers. It was important for the *Star* to keep its readers and modify its technology. To do this, the *Star* had to borrow heavily against their assets. Their competitor, the *Journal-Transcript*, used its ad revenues that slowly came in to purchase their new equipment. Soon the *Star* began to correct its financial mistakes. At this time the *Journal-Transcript* needed a new printing press, and the *Star's* was state of the art. Hence, on January 3, 1944, a joint operation of the *Star* and the *Journal-Transcript* occurred. It was perfect timing for this joining because both newspapers were in need of something which the other had. In their cooperation, both papers occupied separate newsrooms while continuing on separately and fiercely. The company formed was Peoria Newspapers Incorporated.

For the first time, on January 9, 1949, readers picked up the first paper named the *Peoria Journal Star*. This was the *Star's* and *Journal's* first combined Sunday paper. The *Journal Star*, until July 4, 1955, was only a Sunday paper; on this date the first weekday paper was published. This was now a large daily in Peoria, and it would need a large supply of employees to work every day of the week.

As a result of the *Peoria Journal Star* and its predecessors, a rich history was created by Peoria's journalism industry. Four papers, through mergers, became six and all led to the dominant daily that the *Peoria Journal Star* is today. [From *About The Journal Star*. Peoria Journal Star Inc.

<<http://pjstar.com/services/journalstar/history.shtml>>. (Aug. 28, 2008); Jerry Klein, *Peoria!*; Jerry Klein, *The Very Best of. . . Old Peoria*; and Michael Smothers, "Peoria's Paper Trail." *Journal Star* 25 Sep. 2005, H3-H6. *W.P.A. Newspaper Index of Peoria 1838-1864* (Sept. 25, 2005).]